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Russia Warns of Strain on Doctors as Virus Spreads

By AFP

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Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency

Russian authorities said Monday that doctors were under "extraordinary" strain due to surging coronavirus cases in Europe's worst-hit country, with Moscow shuttered during a nationwide holiday to curb infections.

The capital was quiet on the first morning of the working week, with businesses mostly closed and non-essential services in the capital halted from Oct. 28 to Nov. 7.

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Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that doctors working in red zones were facing "extreme physical and emotional stress" with the recent rise in cases.

"Of course the situation is not straightforward. Beds are filled to a large extent, and these days

the situation is not becoming easier," Peskov said.

"This is an excessive and extraordinary burden on our doctors, who are demonstrating heroism with what is happening," he added.

Russia is one of the worst-hit countries in the world and a devastating wave this autumn has seen infections and deaths reach new records, with more than 1,000 fatalities per day.

A government tally recorded 40,402 new infections and 1,155 deaths on Monday, figures that in both cases were just shy of records set over recent days.

Russia has rolled out several homegrown vaccines including Sputnik V but only about a third of the population is fully innoculated.

The Kremlin said last week it hoped the paid holiday period would help stabilize Russia's outbreak and cautioned people against traveling, after surveys showed some 30% of Russians intended to travel.

Ex-president and former prime minister Dmitry Medvedev warned in the Rossiiskaya Gazeta daily Monday there were was an urgent need to increase vaccination rates.

"If we do not find ways to convince people of their irresponsibility, even, to put it bluntly, their anti-social behavior, we will face even more difficult times," he said.

Authorities have been accused of downplaying the pandemic and figures from statistics agency Rosstat last week showed nearly twice as many Covid deaths compared with the government tally.

Rosstat said 44,265 people died of coronavirus in September — nearly double the official government figure, bringing the agency's total virus toll to nearly 450,000, the highest in Europe.

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